Thompson: Good morning, Griffin. Thank you so much for being with us—or, I guess, just me—today. I'm really thankful for the opportunity to get to talk to you and just hear some of your reflections about your time with athletics at Midd and in just in general. Without further ado, would you want to give a little introduction of yourself, how you got into sports—soccer specifically, and how did you end up at Midd?

Price: Well first, thanks for having me, Ellie. I'd say...so I grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I also lived for many years in Connecticut, New Haven. I honestly can't remember a time without soccer. It's just been there my whole life. My aunt was a college soccer player on the Maryland Women's team, and she embraced both my brother and I getting into it early on. It's just been my whole life. I was definitely into other sports, too. I played a lot of baseball. And, it was until I think it was around when I was 10 years old when I quit everything else and just kind of stuck with soccer. And, I think around my freshman year of high school, I was like, "you know what? I think I could really try to do this. And like train, get as good as I can at the sport." What led me to Middlebury, interestingly enough, I didn't...I had a couple of rules about my college process. I said I *didn't* want to go to a small school. Rule number one, because I went to a small high school. I said I *didn't* want to go to a school in New England, because I was tired of the cold weather {laughs}. I wanted to go somewhere else. And then, I ended up at Middlebury, which you know...who knows. I had an injury and had to cancel my college tour for surgery, so I didn't see any of the colleges I wanted to see. On a whim, ended up emailing the Middlebury Soccer coach and was like, "hey, here's my video." He said, "oh, come to camp." And, the camp went really well. And, I went to see the campus after that and fell in love with it completely, and [I] said, "Okay. I want to go here." And then, luckily, the admissions process went well and I was really excited to go. So that was my kind of entryway to Middlebury.

But I hadn't really thought about it that much. I hadn't really been thinking about a lot of small schools. I went to a small private high school where other people were applying to NESCAC schools, so it wasn't completely off my radar, but it definitely wasn't at the forefront of what I was thinking the experience was going to look like.

Thompson: That's kind of funny that everything you didn't want ended up being the definition of Middlebury—small, rural, in the middle of nowhere. That's funny. Can you tell us more about what it was like getting on campus with the team? Going with preseason? The four years that you were a part of the soccer team?

Price: I think it became clear to me early on how important socially being on a team was, especially being a fall sport. I showed up to campus before any of the other freshmen. We have athletes that show up for preseason in the fall. In a week, I already had 30+ guys from freshmen all the way to seniors, who were giving me advice, who were there for me. Saying that...it sounds

basic and “college,” but inviting me to parties and being a part of these social groups that I don’t think I otherwards would have had access to. So that became clear to me early on, how lucky I was to have that group of guys who were there for me. I got to know, especially...I guess it’s because we played the same sport...players on the women’s soccer team. There’s just this whole small community within the Middlebury community that I was instantly getting really close with that proved incredibly valuable. I think I recognized it at the time. It’s crazy when all the other freshmen were moving in… I was just imagining myself in their shoes, showing up to this strange place and you don’t know anyone, which is what happened to me. But, within a couple of days, I knew all these different people across different grades. I was just imagining what it would be like to not have that experience. I’m definitely super grateful to have that right from the beginning, to have other people who had gone through struggles at Middlebury..who have struggles in the classroom or maybe outside of the classroom or struggling on the soccer field. Just a lot of wisdom to draw upon.

Thompson: That’s really cool. I sometimes wish that I did a fall sport, because it seems like those few weeks you get better, or whatever the time is, that you get before school starts that freshman year really impacts how your time at Midd kind of takes off.
Can you expand a little bit more about team culture and just the dynamic of the team in terms of different grade levels. Were they your community on campus?

Price: Oh, “were they your community on campus?” Great question. I think..a couple of things. Over the course of...I should say five years, because I ended up taking a year off. Over the course of my five year experience with being a part of the Middlebury community, I would say things shifted pretty dramatically. When I first was a part of the team, it’s hard to know...it’s hard to sort of differentiate whether—and I think this is why people of color get in their head about these kind of things—it’s hard to know if your experience is a “freshman” experience or whether it’s a “because I identify or present as a person of color...I have darker skin...or my hair is different..all these other things.” I think I had a hard time parsing that out my first year. Is this because I’m a freshman? I’m trying to think of more concrete language for it. Is my...I guess… is my preferred mode of engagement different because I’m a freshman or because there are these cultural differences that aren't really being accommodated. I had a hard time sussing out which one it was at the time. I think it became a lot more clear my sophomore year that-- and it was also dependent on the class, like you said. Did different classes have different dynamic[s]? I think that was very much the case, and that the dynamic of the senior class my freshman year felt a lot more welcoming than the senior class my sophomore year. It was in that space that it became clear that I was different in X,Y, and Z ways and that’s just not really being accommodated on the team. I think it’s both a blessing and-- I’m just an outspoken person in just my personality. It has good and bad {laughs}effects to that. I think the good thing was that there were moments, really learning moments, for some of my teammates that might have been ignorant of somethings and maybe said somethings that they didn’t really understand what they were saying. [I] called

them out for it, and I think those are really-- probably some of my favorite moments in my soccer career, having some really intense conversations with some of my teammates, who, to their credit, were very open to these conversations. I just never thought of things this way. I just really appreciated that experience with pushback. With any type of pushback, there's also the counter pushback of being too outspoken or being the angry Black man and all of those things. But I think the people-- what ended up happening...the people that I may have clashed heads with and disagreed upon, but I think both of us were willing to engage in that disagreement, where the people by the end of that season or by the end of our Middlebury careers, became the closest. And became some of my most beloved teammates for sure. Born out of disagreement, which is a very powerful lesson to learn.

And then going forward to my junior and senior year, obviously being an upperclassmen, the culture shifted pretty dramatically. There were some external factors. More visibility in social justice initiatives. In the summer of 2020 with the rise—or popularity—in mainstream media, in mainstream culture of Black Lives Matter. I think those things helped with that cultural shift on the team, but I also think it was out of real life experiences of myself, my other Black teammates, my other teammates of color that were really trying to push to forefront that, as great of a community that we have been on the Middlebury's Men Soccer Team, there's room to grow. And, I love to frame it as a question of-- trying to frame it in a similar way that we frame most sports. That you don't show up to practice every day thinking about how great the win was last week. You show up to practice to get better every single day and you want to win in the next week. How I tried to frame it was [that] we've been such a great community for so many people and there's so much work that we have to do. We can't rest on our laurels because we recruited X amount of players of color to join the program and then a year later… I think, yeah, it was one season where we had four Black players join the program, which I was really excited about. And unfortunately, that was the Fall semester that I was taking off, part of my year off. And then, I come back to campus and find out that half of them aren't coming back to the program. I'm like, "oh my goodness, what is going on here?" It's funny, because it's so easy to celebrate… "oh, we're such a diverse team..blah blah blah." And then when so many players of color are leaving, we're like, "so, are we accommodating those differences? Are we celebrating those differences and making people feel very much welcome?" That brought up a lot of conversations about who is the typical Middlebury Men's Soccer player? What do we typically conceptualize the archetype? How can we sort of break that down and make different avenues that include more people into the team on the field, and also socially off the field? Not every guy wants to come in and in the offseason sit around in Atwater and have some drinks and listen to EDM music. I don't know. I can say that for a lot of my teammates of color, that was not our mode of socialization, communication. It definitely took brainstorming on behalf of the upperclassmen in my junior and senior year of, "how can we have other ways to socialize and get together as a group that's not necessarily around those things?" Born out of that was maybe doing some album

listening things when an album is released. Do some movie nights. There are all of these different ways that we can connect that aren't just around playing beer pong.

And, I think on the last point of were my teammates my chosen community at Middlebury? It's yes and no. I think it's very clear that it's yes and no. I really wanted them to be my chosen community right from the get go. During the soccer season, for sure, I'm like this is my community and I'm really close with you people. When that wasn't necessarily reciprocated in a way, I had to sort of pivot and figure out, "Okay, if this isn't my chosen community, then what is?" And finding out that...maybe there's lot of players on the football team that I'm going to become friends with. Maybe there's these other people I branch out to and connect to, and I think for that time, it served me really well. I needed to branch out from the team and the guys and things like that. I think it was around a little bit around my sophomore year and *definitely* my junior year, junior soccer season of feeling much more included with the team. Feeling much more welcome and trying to incorporate my teammates into my chosen community of people at Middlebury and people I genuinely wanted to have fun with and hangout with off the pitch. So, it was definitely a tale of two halves of the Middlebury experience. Really needing to go and find my chosen community because I wasn't feeling welcomed to being a leader within the team and having people around me who were very willing to engage and shift the team culture. So much more welcome and having a much better time with that. So {laughs} long winded, but I hope that answers your question.

Thompson: Yeah definitely answers my questions. I also want to talk a little bit about 2016. I mean, 2016...when you just mention that to people, there's so many ways that their mind goes. I am curious about, you were interviewed by Sebastian Sanchez. I think that he is one or two years older than you, at least in terms of "year" at Midd. He wrote an article called, "Diversity Falls Behind in Athletics." There's a lot that anyone can take away from that op-ed, but in terms of the things that were documented that you had spoken about, I was curious how you connected being a goalkeeper to being a quarterback on a football team and how those positions at least historically at that time were predominantly white positions. Could you explain the nature of being a goalkeeper and why, maybe if you do know, it's predominantly white? And, what was it like then, to not be a white man and hold that position?

Price: Yeah, still to this day, there are not a lot of goalkeepers that look like me. It's still very much the case. I think it's the case because there have been studies...there was a study done on commentators, soccer commentators over in Europe. And basically, the study showed that Black players were much more likely to be complimented on their physique. Their speed...their physical attributes, whereas white players were much more likely to be complimented for their vision, their strategy, their technique...things like that. I think that's indicative of the larger thinking behind soccer. In that, the players who we praise who are Black are praised in, "Oh my god, he's so fast on the wing"... and, "he can get down the line." It's much more rare that people

talk about their prowess, how tactically smart and aware they are. And, how they can read the game. I think those are adjectives that aren't afforded to Black players as they are to white players. I think how it comes down to goalkeeping, goalkeeping, I would say, is a much more strategic position than sort of a physical one. I think what gets the headlines are big saves and all that, but I had a goalkeeper coach when I was young tell me that, "if you go an entire game without having to make a save, that means you've done your job to the best of your ability." The majority of the job is communication. I take that to heart. You'll see me you know… {smiles and laughs} I'm a loud person in general, but I like to think that I'm more...maybe jovial is the wrong word. But when I'm on the field, I'm very loud and very commanding of my players and defenders, because you're the only player on the field that can see everything. Just like a quarterback, because you can see everything on the field and you have to direct traffic. You have to move defenders left and right, you've got to push people up and down. You've got to keep the line tight. It's your job. And, in order to do that effectively, you have to read the game well. And so I think a lot of athletes maybe are directed towards a position where they can use their athleticism...whereas a lot of Black athletes where they can take advantage of that versus can take advantage of their strategic brain. I think that's where the disconnect comes. I think the same happens with the quarterback position. Football players that are strong and fast, we'll you're a running back. You're a wide receiver. But it's not necessarily...Lamar Jackson is a famous quarterback. Cam Newton. All these guys that are all compliment on how fast they are, how far they can throw the ball. But it's very rare people talk about the fact that they run in very complicated offenses and have to read a lot of different play calls. It's that mental acuity that isn't recognized as much. That is sort of what I was getting at at that time and still believe that most of the reason why its predominantly white position is because, people don't see Black players as mental, I guess the mental backbone of the team and more the physical.

I didn't-- I was asthmatic, so I didn't have much of a choice. By age 10, I couldn't run around that much anymore, so I had to come up with something else and I became goalkeeper. It's my favorite thing in the world, so I'm glad I did. But, it is difficult when your job is to be the leader, the commander, the communicator and people aren't really used to hearing that from a person that looks like me. Strategizing and all those things.

Thompson: That's really cool to hear. I don't know much about the intricacies of soccer other than I enjoy watching it, so I just learned a lot. I commend you, because it seems like you were a trailblazer at Midd then, just by simply by being. That's a lot of weight, whether or not you wanted it on your shoulders or not. I commend you for that a lot.

Price: Thank you.

Thompson: Another part of the article, so switching back and kind of making you reflect a little more about why you chose Midd. You're also quoted in there that you thought about going to a

Historically Black College or University and exploring that type of learning experience in an environment that is dominated by African Americans, but you ultimately fell in love with Midd. So, what was it that made you ultimately fall in love with Midd?

Price: {big sigh} what was it that made me fall in love with Middlebury? I guess two-- it's sort of a two part question. What made me fall in love with Middlebury was specifically the first… I really wanted to split between how my Middlebury experience would be and how my Middlebury soccer experience would be. I didn't want… I was very conscious of the fact that I wasn't-- I was a really good goalkeeper, I was a really good player, but I was by no means going to walk in and be an absolute star on the team. I was going to have to work for my position and put out a lot of work. I was very conscious of the fact that if I got injured or something happened where I wouldn't… either I wouldn't be able to play soccer anymore or wouldn't be able to play at the level that would put me on the team, then I would no longer be a Middlebury student-athletes. I would just be a student. I was very conscious of-- kind of afraid of picking a school for athletics and something happens and I end up hating the school because I'm no longer playing the sport. So, I was very aware that I didn't want to pick a school just because of the program or just because of the team. My first time at Middlebury, my first experience was just doing the tour. Sitting in the Q&A, walking around the campus, and I would even started on the drive up. I'm from Massachusetts. I had done summer camps in Vermont when I was a kid, but hadn't been back in a long time. I remember we were 30 minutes away. My mom and my dad and I were driving up. We were 30 minutes away and I was just looking around at the mountains and stuff, and I was just like, "this is really nice. This is not the city. I'm kind of out there. This is really nice." And, I just kind of fell in love with it pretty quickly. I loved the Q&A. I was very interested in studying Spanish. The language program sounded attractive to me. The campus was absolutely gorgeous. And, you know, Middlebury is a great school. It checked off a lot of boxes. I remember, this was before I had even met the soccer team who was playing at the time, before my senior year of high school. We got to the top of Mead Chapel and we're looking over the library, the campus...I turned to my mom and said, "yeah, I'm going to go here." She was like, "Griffin, you got to get in first." I was like, "no, no, no. I'm going to go here. It's going to be my school." After that, I met the team, my future teammates and coaching staff. Watched them do a practice. Watched them train. Hung out with them in the dorm rooms, and I was like, "oh my gosh, these guys are awesome." I was so swept away by the whole thing. Really, pretty quickly fell in love with Middlebury. And, I had seen a couple of schools in the Massachusetts area, but I hadn't seen many. You know, I went to Tufts and didn't really enjoy it. I saw John Hopkins and didn't really enjoy it. I hadn't seen many schools, but I had seen a couple. This was the one. I love the school and I'm going to go here.

And, about not going to a predominantly, you know historically Black college and going to a predominantly white institution. The reason why I didn't want to go to a PWI was because that was my high school experience. And, I didn't not enjoy my high school experience very much. I

think I was so cautious about the college being setting up the way I wanted it to be set up, because my soccer experience at my high school was *so* fantastic and my social experience was terrible. And, it was just a very racially segregated space and just not something I wanted to emulate in my future years. I was very cautious about going to a PWI. So that's where maybe going to Howard or something like that came to mind. My aunt graduated from Howard post-graduated. She went to Maryland undergrad, Howard post-grad. Absolutely loved it, so it was definitely on my mind. I think the only reason why I never took it more seriously, because when soccer became an option to play—I knew that I wasn't going to play soccer at Howard. I probably wasn't going to make the team. Or you know, Spelman or Emory or any of these amazing choices. I was like, well this is Division III school where I could probably play and probably have a good experience on the team. And, I loved the school, so for someone who wasn't-- not necessarily that I wasn't planning on playing college soccer, but it wasn't at the forefront of my mind. I was like, I really have a chance to do this and it could be really awesome, so that's kind of how I went in that direction. Who knows if it was the right choice? Who knows? But, here we are and I'm grateful for that experience.

Thompson: It seems like it turned out well.

Price: {light chuckle}

Thompson: It's really cool insight to hear. Middlebury is known to have a lot of dialogue. Maybe that's the brand of a liberal arts college, but I think mostly we've seen that at the forefront of Midd. I want to bring up Charles Murray, because you were there in March at that time I believe 2017. What was that like? Where were you on the day that Charles Murray came?

Price: {big sigh} So I was at a class. So the Charles Murray talk started at 4:30 and I had a Creative Writing class that go out at 4:05. So I knew, basically it was the talk of the campus. There were protests and people were *very* upset. I was a freshman, so I wasn't necessarily tapped into a lot of the activism groups on campus. I wasn't as aware of it as I was in my later years. But I was in this English class {big sigh} and we were talking about it the whole class. I was like, "hopefully I can see it. Hopefully I can get a seat." The class gets out and I immediately go run and see, and there is a line all the way up the hill. Coming out of McCullough and all the way up Mead Chapel. Massive line. I was like, "damn, there's no way I'm going to get in." And I had been feeling off all day, and I was like maybe that's just me being anxious about the talk. I ended up going back to my room and I got super sick. I was very, very ill in my bed on my laptop watching the livestream of the talk. {laughs} Lights off, in the dark. So bad. I definitely missed a lot of the protests during the event. That, I was told by a lot of friends, got really intense. Because I was sick, I ended up missing all of that. Maybe luckily, because some Black students were falsely accused of violence and assault that ended up being cleared. Well, I'm glad no one misidentified me {laughs}, got caught up in something I didn't do. Maybe a good thing, but I

just remember the days...definitely intense in the days leading up. But man, the couple weeks after that, it was like...You walk into the dining hall and you knew that's what everyone was thinking about. You know that's what everyone was talking about. And the campus was just *so* charged. It was pretty insane. I think there's always, you know, the classic: if you're going to protest, why can't you protest peacefully? All that bullshit. I think there were some people, and I even had teammates who were at the time saying that they didn't' like that people didn't want him to speak or didn't let him speak. You know, all these things and not maybe recognizing how the imbalance of power and how being a predominantly white institution inviting a white supremacist talk not about white supremacy but about the economy or whatever the excuse was for inviting him, when he basically thinks that white people are the vaster race {laughs}. I think, you know, for me 2+2. It's very easy to understand why that is incredibly problematic, but I think many people may have missed that point at the time and it took them a while in understanding why that is such a big problem and why BIPOC students were very upset and protesting. Sort of trying to do anything in their power to stop this from happening, which, in my opinion, was very warranted. But it was probably the only thing that compares to the weeks following Charles Murray talk was probably when the list of abusers or assaulted was posted on Facebook. I think that's the only comparison that I have to a moment where the *entire* campus—every single person, every room you walk into, every space you walk into—is all thinking about this one thing, is all talking about this one thing. It's part-- it's *the only* thing you're talking about. It's in your classroom. It's intense at times. I'm glad I got to see that side of things. The media coverage also taught me a lot about how the media covers stories, because it was taken...obviously Fox News picked it up. Even CNN did pretty bad reporting on it. It was sort of misconstrued in a lot of ways that taught me how the media makes a story fit the narrative rather than report on the story. No one reached out. I think there was only one. I think Vice News was the only one to reach out to the actual people who set up the protest. And you know, the activist on Middlebury Campus. Everyone else was kind of hopping on the anti-Middlebury train. {chuckles}

Thompson: You talked a little bit about how some of your teammates brought up some of the frustration of why can't he speak? Why can't he, meaning Charles Murray, speak. So this was something that bubble. I feel like athletics is sometimes that time when we get a part from all the stressors in life, but this was something that was brought up. Was it brought up a lot? Was it something discussed on the team?

Price: Definitely discussed. I think the great thing about being in a team environment is that you all share a common goal about winning games. The sport is what brings you together. It brings together vastly different and diverse groups of people and diverse opinions. The core of the relationship is to try to get better and to try to win, and I think having something to keep—and I'd probably say this for both side—but for me, personally, I had something that no matter if we're disagreeing on this at the moment, I'm speaking to this person out of respect that they

want to improve as a player. They want to improve as a person. That's something we share. There's always something to bring us back to the table to have this conversation again. Versus, I think, other...I think there are other people who are maybe less willing to engage in that discomfort of disagreeing and less willing to be respectful in that setting. You know, people who I wasn't teammates with said, "oh well you don't agree with me? Well, fuck you. I don't have to listen to you…" Those aren't helpful conversations. The thing I appreciated being on a team and having these guys around me was, in these moments and, for example, with Charles Murray, I had teammates who were part of the protests against him and I had teammates, you know, kind of appalled at this and wondering why he wasn't allowed to speak. Questioning why people were so violent and so angry and stuff like that. The one thing that kept bringing us back to the table was that we're on a team and we're in this together. Allowed me to hear...it opened me up to actually try to listen to what they had to say and what their perspective was, and I think it opened them up to maybe viewing me as not just another angry Black person who's mad about this thing, but as someone they know personally very well who is upset and hurt in a lot of ways. I think that I was able to change perspectives and alter opinions in a much more powerful way in that setting than I have been probably in any other setting in Middlebury.

Thompson: I also...one crisis to the next crisis...I'd like to chat a little bit about the last couple of years of your time at Midd. The COVID-19 pandemic, getting the message in March 2020 that we were going to leave campus. Not knowing how you were going to finish your time at Midd solely because of the global health crisis a little bit. Take me through what was going through your mind at that time.

Price: Yeah, it's an understatement to say it was intense. It was intense for everybody. My context was that in the Spring of 2019 had decided for mental health reasons to take some time away from Middlebury. And, it first started with my wanting to take the spring off and then evolved into me thinking that I wanted the full year off. The biggest reason I didn't want to take the full year off was because I wanted to be with the guys and I wanted to play soccer. That was probably the hardest text to send, messaging my teammates and saying, "guys, I'm actually not going to come back for the Fall semester. I just need more time. I need more time away from Middlebury." I had taken that whole year away from Middlebury, and in that spring of 2020, that was my reentry to the College. I have taken the year off and I'm ready. I'm back and ready to train. Do all that good stuff and it felt really good to be back! It felt good to be back on campus and it felt good to be back with my friends. Managing my social life, my school life and my academics *so* much better. Balance was so much better. The time off basically proved valuable. I listened to what I needed and took advantage and returned, and things were going pretty well. And within a month, they were like, "it's time to pack up your things and go home." {big laugh} So, yeah. I basically ended that spring and did the entirety of the next year online. So, not how I envisioned my time at Middlebury going, but I think there's a lot of ways my Middlebury experience hasn't been what I envisioned and has challenged me in ways that I didn't anticipate

and has forced me to grow in ways I wasn't expecting. Sort of-- maybe made a cheeky reference to it early, but I wondered if I made the right decision. But it's truly thinking about… I was challenged in so many different ways at Middlebury that I'm not sure I would have been challenged at other institutions. Maybe I would have. I really don't know. I think how much I've grown as a result of that is pretty irreplaceable. Definitely is not something I would want to trade. So, that was sort of how-- sorry I forgot where I was for a second. That was my context before taking time off before the pandemic from Middlebury.

When the pandemic hit and we were told to go home, quarantining at home with my parents, which was difficult. I'm sure it was for everybody The summer after-- basically when George Floyd was murdered, I knew… this stuff comes up on my radar I think probably more frequently than maybe someone who is nonwhite. What people might not know is that these videos are weekly occurrences. They come up and they are consistently very upsetting about police brutality or even you get those "Karen" yelling at a driver in the parking lot. These things happen every single week, so I see these things happen all the time. The George Floyd video was particularly upsetting. I remember I was just having such a bad day and I was in bed and I was just like, "America is the worst. This country is terrible." But it had never occurred to me that this was something that would extend beyond Black Twitter or extend beyond me and my brother and parents...my aunts and uncles. *Never* did I expect his death would lead to such a national outcry the way that it did, which then had me questioning. Because I remember one of the things that I was conflicted about was Middlebury Men's Soccer. Everybody was putting out a statement left and right, and I was like, "does Middlebury Men's Soccer have to put out a statement about it." And, I think it wasn't until...I had seen the video the day after he died and I was upset and all these things, but I didn't know how big it would get. I think it was like three-- every time Shaun King posts something and then it blows up and the New York Times picks it up or whatever. I think it was four days later where the momentum really started kicking in. And then it was five or so days after that where I got a text from one of my captains asking about Middlebury's been thinking about putting out a statement for the Men's Soccer program. We were-- just if I had any thoughts about it, and it got me thinking about what does it mean for us to put out a statement and those types of things? How do we figure out a structure and criteria for defining what Middlebury Men's Soccer needs to stand on. We're..I think the difficulty and what you want to be careful of-- I think the primary objective here is winning, the games, it's the practices. It's making sure we're taking care of our bodies and our health. But I think maybe a secondary part of that improvement of ourselves on the field is the improvement of us, as men and human beings. I think a huge part of that is developing empathy. Empathy for others, for those who we might not know their experiences and are still able to understand that that is an important experience. An experience that should be celebrated and defended. Vehemently. It became a question of how do we come up with a system for understanding what happened. If an earthquake happens in Haiti or the Taliban takes over Afghanistan. If the ocean catches on fire because of overdrilling. There are so many ways...so many social issues that I might care about

that maybe my teammates don't. How do we recognize that events of the outside world impact certain players more than others? And, how can we protect the players and know that the program has their backing, while also making sure that focus is on soccer...The focus is still on developing us as players? I think that was one of my biggest questions that maybe is still unanswered in a way. That I've been sort of poking at and prodding at. What do we do in certain situations? The first things I said to my coach was, "you know, it took about a week and half for a statement to be made about something of such gravitate to the Black community, that how can we not miss the mark in that way when something happens, we know we have to say something immediately and have a stance on it?" The pandemic shifted the team culture pretty quickly in one of discussion, activism, accountability, taking accountability for our wrongdoings in the past as a soccer program, ways that we've been exclusionary as a soccer program. And, ways that we can improve. It definitely wasn't all negative. I think there was discussion on some of the things that we do really well as a community and strengths in creating community. Putting together a group of men who are very intelligent, very driven, wanting to win, and I think very kind people. And people I like being around. It was like, we have so much to give and so much to offer, and so much more space to learn and grow. I think that was such a great place to be at that time. It was difficult, I think when going remote and not being on campus, it became much harder to—and basically—impossible to interact with the incoming freshman and try to take...I think the biggest thing that I missed out on that I appreciated the most that I didn't touch on in this interview… I really loved being able to take the wisdom from the older juniors and seniors. I kind of missed out on being able to pass on the things that I learned and the things that helped me to the next generation of players in the program. I really feel like I missed out on that, but hopefully the work that me and my teammates did...and some of them took time off and are now going to be back this fall, so there still is a little bit of a connection, a lineage still. Hopefully that work is going to continue. I still am lucky to have a good relationship with my coach and say, "hey, how are these conversations going? How are these discussions going? Are we still keeping tabs on this and this?" So, I'm very grateful for that.

Thompson: It seems like Coach Elias is a really good coach.

Price: Absolutely.

Thompson: Expanding a little bit beyond the time. Actually before getting into that, I want to say that I've gotten to know you briefly a little bit this past year. Even if you haven't been able to bestow that wisdom and passing it back, you definitely have done that in ways that stretch much beyond just the soccer team. So, you should definitely just know that.

Price: I appreciate you saying that. Thank you.

Thompson: I want expand a little bit beyond just the soccer team and conversations and dialogue to broader reflections on the athletic department this past year. A year is a very long and short time all together. I'm curious to know how you felt about the prioritization of social justice that the athletic department took on in terms of DEI. Also culminated in a Black Lives Matter week in this past Spring academic year. I would be interested in hearing your reflections with that.

Price: To be honest, I don't have too many reflections. I was definitely more engaged in the fall and trying to keep...sort of keep the container of the Men's Soccer team together of not being able to compete with other teams and play week in and week out like we normally would. Only being able to practice and having to wear a mask at practice, and all those things. Which ultimately [is] why being remote was a better option for me 'cause I was able to engage with certain things at Middlebury and then engage and jump starting the process of beginning my life—building my life—that was going to be outside of Middlebury. And so, going remote in the middle of Fall semester allowed me to do that. I'm really grateful for that. But in the fall, it certainly was a weekly of how are we prioritizing activism, how are we prioritizing making sure we are being an inclusive team, creating a more inclusive Middlebury. These were all conversations that I was very happy with and excited about the future of the program for those reasons. And then, I think my own personal priorities shifted because I knew I was going to be remote for Spring term. Everyone was remote for J-Term and then I knew that I was going to be remote for the Spring term, and then I was going to graduate after that. I really wanted to pivot my focus. I think I had...one of the main things that kept me engaged with Middlebury was the Men's team and, even though I wasn't a leader or activist leader on campus, this was a space in a smaller community within Middlebury's campus that I could be a leader in some sense. When that chapter ended, I started to look beyond Middlebury. I think that's the reason I don't have as much of a comment on the Spring, because I was working a part-time job and taking five classes to finish up my degree. I would have five classes on Monday and five classes on Wednesday, and then work from Thursday, Friday, Saturday through Sunday. I just didn't have time, really. All I did was study, I was working. And even when I was working, I was studying at work. It was just a lot packed in a single semester. My head was pretty much down the entire time and I don't think I was engaging in a way that I would have if I was on campus at Middlebury and didn't have the distractions like providing groceries for myself and cooking meals. And do all these things that you have to do when you're an adult in real life. It ended up working out well, because the second I graduated, a week later I went back to work. Same job and the same everything. I was already set up and ready to go. That proved to be really valuable.

Thompson: That sounds like a very busy schedule. It seems like you've been a busy man for the best year and a half.

Price: I have, I have.

Thompson: That's insane. Five classes *and* a part-time job. Well good for you for doing that.
Price: Thank you.

Thompson: Lastly, what would you want to see for Midd? What would be your ideal Middlebury in four years? And, I use four years because that's the time a student matriculates through college typically. Give or take four or five years.

Price: I said this in a meeting that we had with I think it was some of the senior leaders on our team and the coaching staff. And, I think the reality of my Middlebury experience is that my time on the team was very shaped by my racial identity and cultural identity. And, in many ways it had negative impacts. As much as I enjoyed my time on the team, as much as I enjoyed the athletics part of my Middlebury experience, my dream was that we could have someone who--you know, we talked about the archetype of what is a Middlebury Men's Soccer player. That we could have someone who does not fit that mold at all in any way. You know, a straight white man from just outside of Boston who went to a private school. We could have someone who is totally opposite from all those things and have...maybe not the exact same experience, but an experience that is less..that is not negatively impacted by how they identify. Whether that's their racial identity and presentation. Whether that's there's sexual identity and sexuality. Whether that's their gender identity and questioning. I think there are so many, whether its their background and how they are raised...one of the interesting responses from my coach was, "Griffin.." Coach Elias said, "Griffin I'm glad you said that because we have a player who is Black, a person of color, coming from Georgia, so definitely outside of that bubble of what we would think of a typical Middlebury student, a typical Middlebury soccer player." So this isn't a hypothetical situation that I hope happens one day. It's very real. We have players who we are recruiting. We want to become a more diverse team. And, I think Middlebury, as a whole, wants to be a more diverse university, a more diverse college. These are very real situations. We have new classes coming in every single year of people all over, from vastly different areas. My dream for Middlebury and my dream for them is that it doesn't have a negative impact because of the way they look or the way that they identify. How feasible is that in the next four years? I don't know, but if I could wave a wand and make my dreams come true, that would be it.

Thompson: That's great. That's really great.

Well, thank you so much for your time today. This time has been invaluable to me and the project. I really appreciate it.

Price: Thank you for reaching out. Let me know how this ends up turning out, maybe into an archival space or whatever. Just keep me updated.